THE ONLY SERIOUS FUTURE PICK LIST!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

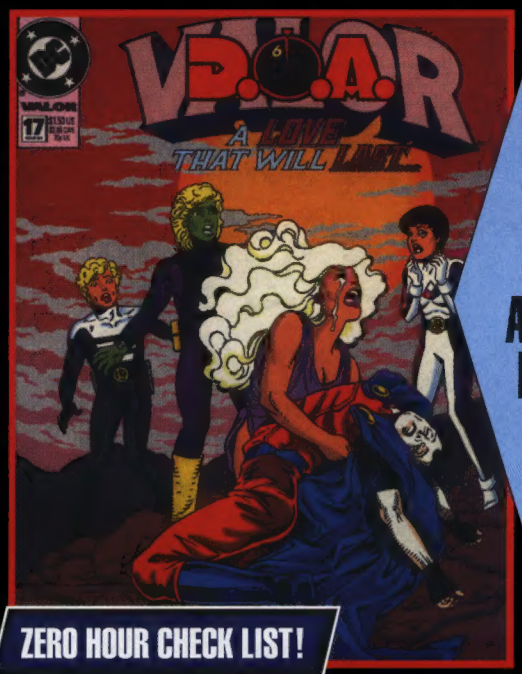
VANTAGE PRESS RELEASE REVIEW

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#3

May, 1994

USA $2.95/Canada $3.70



ZERO HOUR CHECK LIST!

VALOR #17? ARE WE NUTS?

TOP PICK OF THE MONTH

QUESADA VS. VALIANT!
READ BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY!

FUTURE PICKS:

- INSIDE INFO ON DC'S ZERO HOUR!
- DC BACK ISSUES: GOOD PICKS?
- HIDDEN LIEFELD PICKS!
- CREATOR-OWNED COMICS!
- NON-SPORTS CARDS PICKS!

INSIDE INFO:

- VALIANT'S BIG SUMMER!
- MARVEL PULLS OUT!?!
- NEW MALIBU CROSS-OVER!

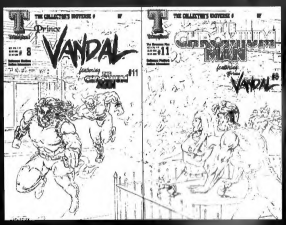
INTERVIEW! VALIANT ARTIST DAVE ROSS!

IS EXTREME STUDIOS ABOUT TO EXPLODE?

JUNE 1994 & JULY 1994
The Chromium Man
and
Prince Vandal
meet again!

Two great characters!
One great comic!

COVER PROTOTYPE

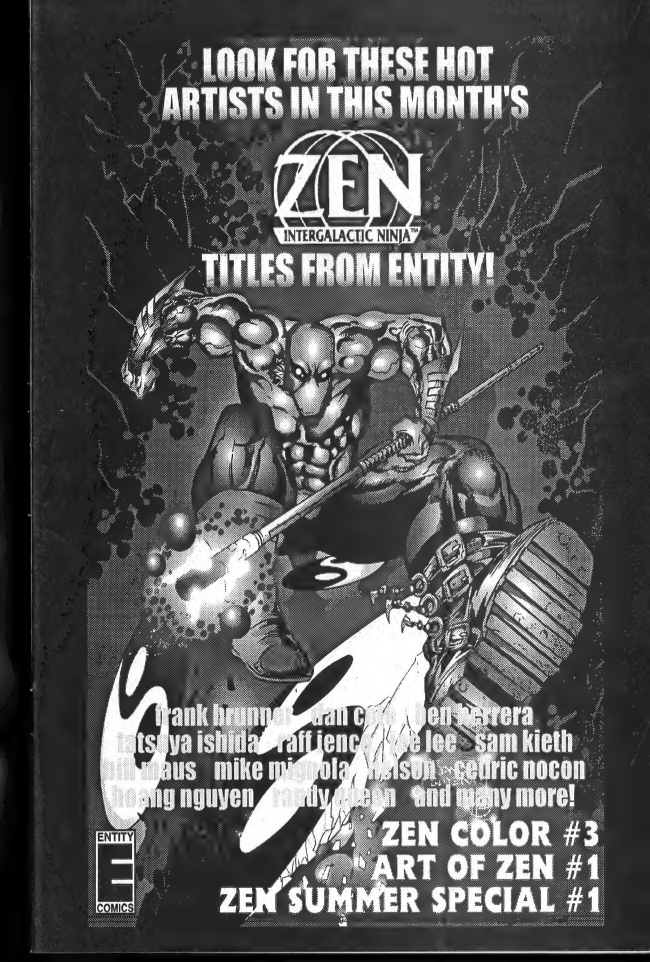


BACK COVER **FRONT COVER**

LOOK FOR THESE HOT ARTISTS IN THIS MONTH'S

ZEN
INTERGALACTIC NINJA™

TITLES FROM ENTITY!



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[illegible]hoang nguyen · randy [illegible]n · and many more!

ENTITY COMICS

ZEN COLOR #3
ART OF ZEN #1
ZEN SUMMER SPECIAL #1

VANTAGE
PRESS RELEASE REVIEW
Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!
#3

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We asked for letters. You sent us letters. Funny how that works. Check 'em out — you wrote us some cool stuff.

staff

Publisher and Editor in Chief	Rob Golub
Editor	Steve Asvitt
Creative Director	Tracy Willems
Art Director	Steve Reid
Non-Sports Expert	Rembert Parker
Assistant Art Director	Steve Busti
Press Release Art Director	Annie Schultz
Suspended Animation	Michael Vance

Special thanks to our advisors!

Vantage: Press Release Review,
Volume One, Number Three, May 1994

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Cover: Valor TM & © 1994 DC Comics
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SAY GOODBYE TO "INVESTMENT"

You may not have noticed but we've been slowly phasing out the word "investment" for months. While we used to have the word "investment" on our cover and throughout our text, you'll find it no longer appears anywhere in Vantage.

After two successful years of growth why would we make such a change?

Well, there are a few reasons. First and foremost, we've come to view the word "investment" as misleading. The word could imply to some readers that we believe that new comics are great investments that can be put away for twenty years, to be taken out and resold at a substantial profit. Vantage does not believe this to be so.

New comics can be relatively rare, but never rare. There are thousands of copies of each new comic and the world of comics changes so rapidly that it is unlikely that today's new books will be the next decade's treasures.

Well then, what's the purpose of Vantage? Vantage serves a variety of people. We serve store owners who need to know where the market will be going. We inform show dealers and wholesalers who must keep a close eye on the potential of future picks. Indeed, many of our subscribers are such dealers.

But perhaps most important to us is that we also serve the average collector. Thanks to Vantage, the average collector can finally have an advantage in the marketplace. The collector can use Vantage to pick up the hot books of the future before they go up, to read and collect them affordably. Or, the collector can use Vantage to pick up some good trading material for the future. Lastly, the collector can use Vantage to buy a comic before it heats up, so as to sit back, and say "cool!"

To this day, I am that kind of collector. The thrill of picking up Green Lantern #48 when it came out and then watching all of the big dealers get excited about it afterwards — there's nothing else quite like it. That's what Vantage is named for — the new adVANTAGE that we provide to the average collector!

—Rob Golub

Top Picks of the Month

Star Slammers #1 (Malibu/Bravura)
Valor #12-up (DC/Zero Hour)

More Vantage Picks

Crisis On Infinite Earths #1-12 (DC back-issues)
Hawkman #9-up (DC/Zero Hour)
Legionnaires #16-up (DC/Zero Hour)
Legion of Superheroes #57-up (DC/Zero Hour)
Lightning Comics Presents #1 (Lightning Comics)
Prudence and Caution #1 (Defiant)
Prophet #7 (Image/Extreme Studios)
Team Titans #19-up (DC/Zero Hour)
The Ray #1-2 (DC)
Starwatchers #1 (Valiant)
Team Youngblood #9 (Image/Extreme Studios)
Violator #1 (Image/Todd McFarlane Productions)
Youngblood #2 (Image/Extreme Studios back-issue)

VANTAGE PICK

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose their standing in the market after months or years. You would be wise to trade or sell books beforehand. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for future winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those sealed polybags and have some fun reading!"
- Publisher Rob Golub

TOP PICK OF THE MONTH:

THE COUNTDOWN TO ZERO HOUR!

Something is dreadfully wrong.

Throughout the DC universe, the dead live, doppelgangers exist, and people and places are changing! Something is causing a temporal breakdown heading towards a DC universe-wide disaster — towards Zero Hour.

Zero Hour is DC's major summer event which will eventually involve every title and will cause giant changes within the universe!

DC comic books are even now leading up to a weekly five-issue Zero Hour mini-series . . . . **Zero Hour: Crisis in Time.** The mini-series will count down from #4 to #0, reaching a major shake up in the DC universe at then end of July. This mini-series is written and penciled by Dan Jurgens, one of the prime architects of the landmark "Death and Return of Superman".

To further build the excitement, every DC universe title cover-dated October (coming out this summer) will be a #0 issue! **This shows a major commitment to this project,** for it would be difficult for DC to publish additional #0 issues for the same titles — this is a trick you can pull just once! (To have two issues of the same title with the same number would only confuse the customer.)

The **Legionnaires** and the **Legion of Superheroes** titles get involved in #16 and #57 respectively (though they might be involved as of earlier issues — this is unclear as **Vantage** goes to press). The Legionnaires learn that their origin is part of the great temporal anomaly that threatens reality across the span of 1000 years!

Legionnaires, Valor, and Legion of Superheroes will soon enter into the "End of an Era" cross-over, which leads right into Zero Hour. "End of an Era" and Zero Hour are being written together under the direction of the same DC editor, K.C. Carlson.

"It seems clear that once the entire DC universe gets sucked in demand for the early Zero Hour issues could easily explode."

In **Team Titans** #20-25 the Team discovers that they are programmed to kill — that the mysterious Leader sent them on a mission through time for a hideous purpose. The Team along with hundreds of others, are sleeper agents designed to carry out a murderous plot!

Developments in **Hawkman** relegated to Zero Hour bode poorly for the Hawkworld Thanagar. Sources indicate this storyline **is also closely related to Zero Hour.**

Months ago, DC quietly began to introduce time anomalies into one of the most obscure titles — Valor. Today, the time anomalies are quickly expanding to other books, and in May they will finally hit "mainstream" titles like **Justice League International** and **The Flash.**

Valor #12-17 makes up the Dead Of Arrival storyline where Valor's death shatters the continuity of the DC universe. It was Valor who had seeded many of the worlds that the Legionnaires had originated from. With Valor dead before his time, the universe is thrown into chaos in **Valor** #18-21. This leads into the End of an Era cross-over.

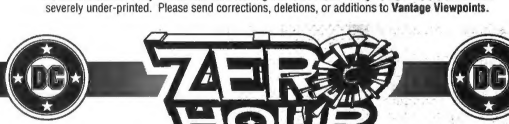
The bottom line here is that Valor is the starting point for Zero Hour. Zero Hour completists of the future will have no choice but to hunt for those Valor back issues! Plus the **Vantage**-estimated print runs for the first few issues of Valor/DOA: a low 50,000 each. Yum ... now that's a pick!

It seems clear that once the entire DC universe gets sucked in demand for the early Zero Hour issues could easily explode. To get your hands on the early Zero Hour issues before they price themselves out of your reach just take a gander at our hand-dandy Zero Hour checklist!

Zero Hour TM & © 1994 DC Comics

THE VANTAGE ZERO HOUR CHECKLIST

DC Comics has a variety of obscure titles leading into Zero Hour. Many of these books have been severely under-printed. Please send corrections, deletions, or additions to **Vantage Viewpoints.**



August 1993:

❑ **Valor #12.** Part one of D.O.A. storyline. Valor meets and "saves" Lori. Valor finds out he's dying.

September 1993:

❑ **Valor #13.** Part two. Valor's record disappears from Legionnaire computer — the first DC time anomaly?

October 1993:

❑ **Valor #14.** Part three. Valor reappears in the Legionnaire's computer as an obscure hero who died of lead poisoning in 1994. This creates a paradox: Without Valor's legacy the Legionnaires cannot exist. Valor and Lori get closer.

November 1993:

❑ **Valor #15.** Part four. Valor shows his self-less-ism — he decides that if he's going to die, he must do as much good as possible before then.

December 1993:

❑ **Valor #16.** Part five. Lori (Glorith) turns out to have betrayed Valor!

January 1994:

❑ **Valor #17.** Part six (final part to D.O.A. story). A legionnaire disappears due to the contradictory time-stream; Valor dies, thanks to Glorith. Young Brainiac screams at her, "You've shattered the very laws of time! The consequences . . . they're unimaginable!" A different Valor then arrives, alive, through a time portal! This could turn out to be a very important issue.

February 1994:

❑ **Team Titans #19.** Past and future crash around the team.

❑ **Valor #18.** With the first Valor dead, the space-time continuum continues to unravel.

March 1994:

❑ **Hawkman #9.** DC tells Vantage that this issue ties into Zero Hour as, far from Earth, an omnious figure moves on a collision course for the Hawkworld Thanagar.

❑ **Legion of Superheroes #57.** Unsettling developments in the time-stream lead to "future" problems.

❑ **Team Titans #20.** Several Titans die in this issue setting the stage for Zero Hour.

❑ **Valor #19.** Somebody must take Valor's place in history or the Legionnaires will cease to exist.

April 1994:

❑ **Darkstars #21.** The countdown to Zero Hour begins for the Darkstars as former Green Lantern John Stewart is approached by the Darkstars' masters, the Controllers, for a mysterious mission.

❑ **Hawkman #10.** Countdown to Zero Hour continues.

❑ **Legion of Superheroes #58.** More anomalies in the time stream lead to a surprising alliance.

❑ **Team Titans #21.** Hints of Zero Hour continue to unfold as the reader finds are shattered by ... [illegible] destruction.

❑ **Valor #20.** The disclaimed" Valor must repair a damaged timeline — the biggest mission of his life. If he fails the future could cease to exist!

May 1994:

❑ **Darkstars #22.** Countdown to Zero Hour continues for the Darkstars.

❑ **Flash #93.** The future-time fugitive Inertia/Alden McCaw is punished right in the 21st century!

❑ **Hawkman #11.** As part of Zero Hour, the Hawkgod speeds towards Earth . . . and Hawkman!

❑ **Justice League International #58.** The Judgment Day cross-over ends. This issue leads into Zero Hour.

❑ **Legionnaires #16.** Several heroes travel through time in this PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!

❑ **Legion of Superheroes #59.** Another PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!

❑ **Valor #21.** Valor is on a mission he must complete. Another PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!

❑ **Team Titans #22.** The countdown to Zero Hour continues as the U.S. Government sends the Titans to clean up a nuclear disaster.

THE CHAOS EFFECT: COULD IT EXPLODE?

Vantage has managed to gather some of the inside details regarding this summer's main event at Valiant — the Chaos Effect cross-over. This will be Valiant's biggest event since Unity. It could propel Valiant back into the spotlight!

Vantage has learned that the Chaos Effect will be caused by Ivar, Valiant's time travelling hero. Ivar goes to the end of time and faces a huge deposit of energy. He flees through time and the energy follows, causing a huge shock wave in the universe.

This turns out to cause, well, chaos. On Earth people get killed, cities are razed, you know, the whole nine yards. While Earth is getting a beating, Valiant's heroes are being affected in different ways. Some become weaker. Other heroes become stronger. Some are not affected by the Chaos Effect energy at all.

Sounds like good fun. Look for early Chaos Effect books to gain market attention nicely, even if this doesn't turn out to be as big as Unity was for Valiant. Sources close to Valiant indicate that story lines leading to the Chaos Effect will be popping up in regular Valiant titles as early as mid-June.

Bottom line? Keep an eye on this one — lower expectations for Valiant will mean low print runs. The early Chaos issues could do very well. Should be a blast to read as well — **Vantage** loves chaos.

VALIANT'S SECRET VISITOR

In the midst of all the Chaos Effect murmuring, Valiant has been floating out rumors about The Visitor.

Through a bit of deduction and investigation **Vantage** has managed to discern this: **Sources indicate that the Visitor's first appearance in the Chaos Effect will be in a one-shot comic entitled Chaos Effect Alpha.** This will be a free book that will be given to retailers in an amount equal to double the lowest ordered Valiant title. **Chaos Effect Alpha** is scheduled to ship from the printer to stores in the second week of June.

"The first appearance of the Visitor is apparently already out there somewhere."

Oh yeah, one more thing — we said "first appearance in the Chaos Effect," not the "first appearance." **The first appearance of the Visitor is apparently already out there somewhere.** Yum! If this is not already a major character, the book with the first Visitor appearance could do very well in the market.

If you've got a good guess, let us know in **Vantage Viewpoints.** If the Visitor's identity isn't already known, we'll toss your guesses at Valiant and see if they break under the pressure of your wise logic.

Vantage has learned that Kevin Van Hook is temporarily leaving **Eternal Warrior** to write **The Visitor**, a series focusing on the Visitor character due out in December 1994. "The Visitor is crucial to the continuity of the Valiant Universe," said Van Hook. "We've said for a long time that we'd cap the Valiant Universe at 18 regular monthly titles. With this in mind, we've developed the idea of **The Visitor** as a book that could encompass everything great about how we do comics."

Van Hook also told **Vantage**, "The Visitor has got a great science fiction element, the whole continuity of the Valiant Universe flows to and through the story, and several hanging plot threads will help weave the initial story in the book . . . we're already dropping hints about who or what the Visitor is [in Valiant comic books]."

Valiant Logo TM & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc.

CLAREMONT WRITES PRUDENCE AND CAUTION

Chris Claremont, the guy who made the X-Men into one of the best-selling comics of all time, writes the first few issues of **Prudence and Caution.** If you're looking for a good read, this is a safe bet . . . but be forewarned: Claremont's leave-'em-hanging writing style is not for those of you who like to have your questions answered. Claremont has a real talent for developing plots without reaching conclusions.

"Defiant does this with all other writers and artists who have a 'great influence over the development' of Defiant characters."

The bad news: Claremont does not own **Prudence and Caution** and he will be leaving the book around issue #3 or #4.

The good news: He'll be back, says Defiant, around issue #6-7. Plus, while not a creator-owner of the characters, Claremont does get a royalty in perpetuity.

In other words, Claremont gets a cut every time a comic featuring **Prudence** or **Caution** is published. Pretty neat, eh? Defiant does this with all other writers and artists who have a "great influence over the development" of Defiant characters.

Claremont's hiatus from **Prudence and Caution** will give him a chance to work on other projects such as his novel for George Lucas, which is currently in the works.

The book does fit in with the rest of the Defiant universe. Should be great reading, with potential to heat up as well.

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VANTAGE

WANTED:

GOLDEN AND/OR SILVER AGE

WRITER!

If you'd like to write a short monthly article about the market for Golden and/or Silver Age books please call or write. Serious inquiries only.

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Vantage Gold or Silver Writer
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West Allis, WI 53227

MARVEL FLEXES ITS MUSCLES:

PULLS OUT OF THE CATALOGS!

Very quietly and with little publicity, Marvel has used some of its clout in a new way.

This is all complicated insider's stuff so we'll have to ask you to be patient while we back up and explain it. It won't hurt your head too much, but we promise you'll be happy to have the knowledge in your head once we're done.

Getting a comic book from the publisher (Marvel, DC, etc.) to the store owner is no easy task. The comics have to be counted, sorted, trucked, kept in good condition, and so on. That's why publishers don't send their comics to the stores. They let an expert handle it — a middleman. There are only a small handful of middlemen who handle comics — they're called comic book distributors.

Here's how it works: Diamond is a large and very successful comic book distributor. They publish **Previews**, which lists all comics coming out in about two months. You can buy **Previews**, fill out your order form, and turn it over to your comic shop. The shop has their own copy of **Previews**, with a **Previews** order form for stores that the store later fills out and gives to Diamond.

Diamond then adds up all of the forms and tells Marvel how many copies of **Nova** #10 Diamond will need for stores. Marvel prints 'em and gives them to Diamond. Marvel basically says, "We printed the comics — now you get them to where they need to go."

Diamond then turns around and trucks to the stores exactly what the stores ordered. It's a good deal for Marvel and other publishers (including **Vantage**) because we all know, thanks to **Previews**, exactly how many to print.

It works the same way with other distributors and their catalogs: Capital City and **Advance Comics**, Friendly Frank's and **Future Comics**, Heroes World and **Comics Scoreboard**, Styx and **Up n' Coming**.

This set-up also gives the distributors some influence over what titles you see in your local shop, since they decide how much to promote each comic or magazine. Thes distributors also promote **Vantage** in the catalogs and truck **Vantage** to the loc comic shop. (Are they reading this? ". uhhh, nice distributors, nice distributors").

Each month publishers (includir **Vantage**) send a description of what will b coming out to each of these distributors they can print it in their catalogs. The cat logs, though, have limited space and the own editorial staff so the don't always print exact what we or any other pu lisher sends in. They usual try to improve it, c unnecessary stuff out, mak corrections, and so on. Un now.

The rest of us will conti ue as always — everyor from **Vantage** to DC Com sends in a monthly descri tion, subject to editin Marvel, however, no longer does so.

Beginning last month, for comics comir out in May, Marvel stopped sending the descriptions in for editing. Instead, they' started taking out a huge advertising secti in the consumer-versions of the aforeme tioned catalogs with Marvel's own descri tions, written by their own staff. The section called **True Believer**, and it is not subject the same editing as other publishers' descri tions.

Delears don't get a **True Believer** in the catalog — they get a retailer's edition cat log with no Marvel section. They get a se ond publication called **Sales to Astonis Sales to Astonish** is pretty much the same **True Believer** with some added informatio for dealers.

Marvel's basic plan here is to try to g retailers to make use of **Sales to Astonish**, as to make them aware of the other mo keting info that **Sales to Astonish** contains.

If dealers sell out of **True Believer** ar misplace their **Sales to Astonish**, they mig be forced to order "blind." **It is possible th the initial confusion over these develo ments could keep orders for key May Marv books low. Vantage** recommends yo keep a close eye on May Marvel books.

Marvel Logo TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group

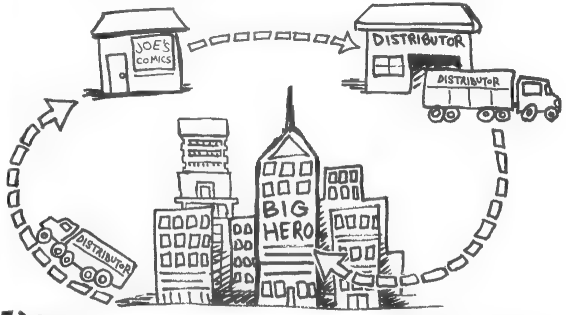
The Comic Book Market

How It All Works

A Vantage Guide

1) Joe's sends in an order for 50 *Big Hero* #1's.

2) Order received by distributor.



3) Distributor tells publisher how many to print.

4) Big Hero gets the order and prints about as many as stores, dealers, and some collectors have ordered in advance (back at step 1)

5) Big Hero sends to stores what was ordered.

Joe's pretty experienced and chances are he ordered what he needed--but if he was not told that *Big Hero* #1 featured the first appearance of Big Heroine, he could have too few copies, and demand could go up!

VANTAGE™

IMAGES OF TOMORROW

EXTREME ON THE RISE?

Valiant publishes comics. So does Marvel. Dark Horse, Malibu, and DC too.

Image? Well, sort of . . .

Image, for the most part is really just a brand name. There's no Image studio where all of the Image artists hang out and draw. Instead, there are a variety of studios that are each allowed to use the Image abel. We're talking groups like Extreme Studios (owned by Rob Liefeld), Homage Studios (Jim Lee), and of course, Todd McFarlane Productions.

If **Vantage** calls the Image office with a question they'll usually tell us to call the studio — each studio handles most of its own marketing, creative decisions, art, and writing. Still, they all use the Image brand-name on their books.

"Liefeld is purposely not releasing advance information or artwork so as to make #9 into a huge surprise splash!"

Our point? To understand Image, one needs to look at Image as a collection of studios. Once you do so, you'll see that Extreme Studios is in a strong position.

First, Extreme has super-hot artist Stephen Platt on board, now penciling Prophet #5-up. Second, Extreme's Rob Liefeld is now finishing up his curiosity-building hiatus — he is to come back with a dramatic, new drawing style. Third, Extreme has demonstrated an understanding of how to create a collectible.

How? **Vantage** was impressed by their recent publication of **Prophet #4**. Inside sources indicate that only 20% of the run came with a Stephen Platt cover, while the other 80% featured a lesser known artist's cover. The move was completely unannounced. **Advisors are reporting that this dual-cover comic has fueled the nationwide Platt sensation!**

Vantage foresees great potential for the excitement over Platt to spill over into non-Platt Prophet comics, including Prophet's origin in **Youngblood #2**. **Vantage** expects that the excitement could then spill over into other Extreme Studios books thanks to Liefeld's return and the inevitable Prophet and/or Platt cross-overs.

Important: Liefeld is returning in **Team Youngblood #9** after a long hiatus. Sources close to Rob Liefeld indicate that his artwork will be very different. **These sources further indicate that Liefeld is purposely not releasing advance information or artwork so as to make #9 into a huge surprise splash!**

Keep in mind that Liefeld is the guy who turned New Mutants into one of the hottest series out there a couple of years back. **Team Youngblood #9** has strong potential.

We're keeping a close eye on Extreme's "Images of Tomorrow" promotion. What the heck is Images of Tomorrow?

Simple. This month you can purchase the twenty-fifth issue of Brigade, Bloodstrike, and Stormwatch about fifteen months early!

These issues will fit seamlessly between the storylines of #24 and #26 down the road, but for today they are just a peak at the future. **Vantage** expects that even if Extreme reprints their #25 issues consumers will still prefer the original back-issues. **Look for #25-hungry collectors swarming around the local show tables several months down the road after the #26s come out!**

The exciting artwork and under-rated storylines at Extreme could have an increasingly bright future.

Comics Published by Extreme Studios:

- Team Youngblood
- Brigade
- Bloodstrike
- Supreme
- Newmen
- Prophet
- Stormwatch

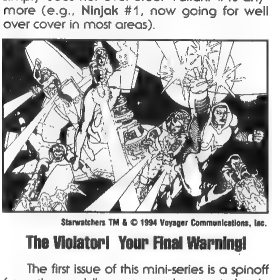
Images of Tomorrow TM & © 1994 Extreme Studios

VANTAGE QUICKIES

Watch Starwatchers!

Following the wrap-up of the Malev war (finally!), the Starwatchers will be threatened by those dastardly Spider Aliens, meet Solar the Destroyer, and experience the Chaos Effect. **Starwatchers** #1 is due out this month, written by Tony Bedard, penciled by Mike Leeke, and inked by well-respected Dick Giordano.

Every issue of the **Starwatchers** will be presented in Valiant Vision. Look for the **Starwatchers** to do nicely in a market that simply does not over-order Valiant #1s anymore (e.g., **Ninjak** #1, now going for well over cover in most areas).



Starwatchers TM & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc.

The Violator! Your Final Warning!

The first issue of this mini-series is a spinoff from the world's most popular comic book: **Spawn**. Not drawn by McFarlane but still by an impressive team: Alan Moore (**Watchmen**) and Bart Sears (remember that **X-O Manowar** #14 cover?).

The **Violator** #1 should be well-ordered, but at a low $1.95 cover price look for demand to come in heavy. Without a doubt, **Vantage** looks forward to reading this one. **Vantage** warned you months ago that attention would soon focus on early Violator appearances. This is your final warning! Due out this month.

Lightning Comics Presents!

Vantage has noticed improvement in the readability of Lightning Comics in recent months. **Lightning Comics Presents** #1 could turn out to be the most sought after book in Lightning's back-issue cache, thanks to its title and showcase-style line-up of stories. Due out soon.

Creator Owned: Star Slammers!

Sci-fi mercenaries shoot it out in this action-packed thriller! In the wake of market contractions, **Vantage** has more confidence in creator owned titles than ever.

This one's owned and created by Walter Simonson, the penciler/inker of Thor fame. We've already told you about those rare Star Slammers early appearances in previous issues of **Vantage**. This new first issue should gain market attention slowly but surely.

Simonson is one of those rare birds who can write as well as he draws. You can count on **Vantage** putting our feet up and enjoying this one. Watch for more Star Slammers after this five issue mini. **Star Slammers** #1: Due out soon and a Top Pick of the Month!

Thinking Ahead: Crisis On Infinite Earths

The year is 1985. DC takes a look at its triple-digit issue numbers and tired characters . . . and decides to add some spice while tying up inconsistencies. Enter **Crisis on Infinite Earths** #1-12, the rebirth of the DC universe. This series is essentially the origin of DC's universe since 1985 — watch for interest in this old classic to heat up in response to the coming interest in Zero Hour. Marv Wolfman's story is truly an epic — read it!

Ultraverse-?????? Cross-Over

Inside sources have indicated to **Vantage** that we can expect a major announcement this summer from Malibu and some other company. Our sources indicate that Malibu is working on a cross-over event with another company. We'll keep you posted as information comes in.

Crow Movie To Be Released

The Crow motion picture has been scheduled for a Friday, May 13th release. The film will adapt James O'Barr's brooding, violent comic book series. There were a number of accidents during production, including the sad death of star Brandon Lee. Watch for new attention to focus on **The Crow** back-issues thanks to the movie.

☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Homage

STUDIOS

Reprinted below is an official press release exactly as it was mailed to Vantage. Since press releases come straight from comic publishers, they can be the most accurate, most up-to-date source of news possible. They can also be biased.

CLAREMONT, LEE TOGETHER AGAIN

Former X-Men collaborators produce three-part WildC.A.T.s story

***

San Diego--Chris Claremont, the award-winning writer best known for his ground-breaking work on X-Men, has reunited with former X-Men artist Jim Lee to produce a special three-part WildC.A.T.s story arc. The story, which will team Lee's best-selling WildC.A.T.s with the Huntsman, a new character created and owned by Claremont, will appear in WildC.A.T.s 10, 11, and 12, produced by WildStorm Productions and published by Image Comics. The two creators previously collaborated on Marvel's X-Men #1, which set an all-time comic-book sales record.

"I've already gotten the first plot from Chris, and I'd almost forgotten how terrific his stories are," Lee said. "He's arguably the best writer in the business. It's a pleasure to work with him again. The story's got everything readers have come to expect from Claremont, and a few new twists to boot-- the fans are going to go nuts over this one! This is Chris's return to super-heroes-- with a vengeance!"

"I'm very happy to be working with Jim again, " said Claremont. "This is a project that we've worked towards and looked forward to almost since the start of Image itself. Our ambition is to make the finished product well worth the wait for ourselves and our audience both."

In addition to containing the first appearance of Claremont's Huntsman and his supporting cast of characters, WildC.A.T.s 10 also introduces Tapestry, a deadly foe from Zealot's past, and features the return of the Tri-Ad. The series will establish elements vital to the storylines of both WildC.A.T.s and Claremont's upcoming Huntsman comic.

WildC.A.T.s 10 will ship in late April, 1994.

VANTAGE

What The Press Release Doesn't Mention!

Heh-heh-heh . . . Sources close to Image indicate to Vantage that Claremont is seriously considering giving the Huntsman character his own Image series . . . WOW! Imagine what Claremont and Image could pull off together! Huntsman's first appearance will be *Wild C.A.T.S.* #10 -- one of last month's pickst! Yum.

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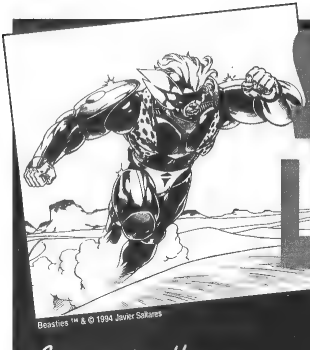

Beasties ™ & © 1994 Javier Saltares

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ARE WE CRAZY???

Announcing the...

VANTAGE *Signature Series*

Vantage has made special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics– we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't ever pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! **Vantage Signature Series** comics are signed and numbered, strictly limited to unfathomably low quantities, and are truly affordable! The catch? There's two of 'em:

1) You must use the coupon provided– no copies;

2) If we receive over 200 orders we will return checks at random (sorry, we have no choice)!

Offer expires June 15, 1994.

About Javier Saltares and *Beasties* #1...

Javier is the penciler who helped to make *Ghost Rider* one of the hottest books in the nation a few years back! After a few low profile projects and a break from comics, Javier is back with his first creator-owned venture published by the new Image-style creator company – Axis!

☐ Yes, I'd like ***Beasties*** #1, personally signed by Javier Saltares, numbered and limited to 200, with accompanying certificate of authenticity! I understand that if **Vantage** receives orders for over 200 copies my coupon and money may be selected at random to be returned (I will receive a full refund).

Enclosed is $9.95 + $2.00 (shipping)= $11.95 total

Name: _____

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Please send check or money order with this coupon (no copies) to:

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West Allis, WI 53227

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SIGNED BY COVER ARTIST BILL TUCCI!!!

We want you to help us spread the word about how cool **Vantage** is! Just fill out the coupon below, have your local store fill out their half, and send it in FAST! Hey, the odds are in your favor, because how many people are really going to bring this coupon back to their comic store and bug the guy behind the counter with it? If you win, you'll get the rare **Vantage: Press Release Review #1** signed by up-and-coming cover artist Bill Tucci . . . and of course the **VANTAGE GIANT NOTHING** (what?)! Plus, you'll see your name printed in **Vantage!** Wild!

READ THE RULES: 1) Surprise, surprise, no purchase necessary. 2) To win, you must send in an entry (coupon filled out by two people: The top gets filled out by YOU The bottom gets filled out by the guy sitting behind th counter at your local comic shop. 3) You may send in you entry on another piece of paper, or on a photocopy of th coupon. 4) Send as many TUCCI contest entries as yo want, but each contestant may send in only one per store The store does not have to carry **Vantage.** You can ma your entries to us all in the same envelope, so feel free t hit every store in your city. Entries that are not signed by a actual store employee will be disqualified. Entries that ar not 100% filled out and complete will be disqualified Contest ends 5/28/94.

YOU KNOW THE RULES. YOU KNOW THE PRIZE.
FILL OUT THIS COUPON AND YOU COULD WIN:
VANTAGE: PRESS RELEASE REVIEW #1 SIGNED BY ARTIST BILL TUCCI!!
PLUS THE VANTAGE GIANT NOTHING!!!

To be filled out by you:

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To be filled out by a comic store employee, owner, or manager:

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"I certify that I really do work for a comic store and that I really do want my customer to win free stuff."

Employee Name:_____ Employee Signature:_____

On a scale from one to five (FIVE IS BEST), does your customer like Vantage?
___5 ___4 ___3 ___2 ___1

Your customer's favorite things about Vantage from recent issues: _____

_____

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Store Owner: Your customer got this coupon from **Vantage: Press Release Review,** the world's only mag for people who are really se ous about the comic book marketplace! We don't cover what happened three Tuesdays ago. Oh no. **Vantage** is so well loved because w put it on the line and make for-real, logical predictions about the future of comics! We ship ON TIME (at the end of each ship month) a we are really cool. Try us! You'll like us! For a free sample issue contact: 414-545-3646 (stores only).

In **Advance Comics:** Look under **Vantage: Press Release Review,** before **Wizard!**
In **Comics Score Board:** Look under **Vantage,** after Valiant!
In **Future Comics:** Look under **Vantage,** after Valiant!
In **Previews:** Look under **Vantage,** after Valiant!
In **Up N' Coming:** Look under **Vantage,** in the middle of nowhere!

Mail to: VANTAGE TUCCI CONTEST, Suite #166, 10238 West National Avenue, West Allis, WI 53227
This entry should be mailed in by the contestant, not the comic store! Good luck!

Congratulations to Jorge Lee of Los Angelos, CA for winning our Sandman Gold contest! Jorge is now the proud owner o a Sandman Gold, the **Vantage Giant Nothing,** and other neat stuff! Way to go, Jorge!

NON-SPORTS PREDICTIONS: SANS SUPER-HEROES

After several months that were top-heavy with super-hero cards, this month brings us a large number of non-super-hero non-sports cards.

Potential Card Picks

Bone Collector Cards
Coca-Cola Ladies Metal Card Set
Frazetta Hologram Uncut Sheet
Akira Preview Set

A Bone-tiful Harvest

Jeff Smith is not a household name, but his inspired, cartoon-style comic character Bone seems to be close to achieving that status. A quick glance at any comic price guide will demonstrate the growing demand for the comics that chronicle the adventures of Bone and company -- early first prints of the books are highly sought-after. While this cult-classic status might be enough to propel a card set to short-term success, there are a few quiet secrets that virtually ensure the long-term success of these cards.

First, the basics: The card set itself is similar to many others put out by Comic Images — a 90-card set, 48 packs per box, 10 cards per pack, several chase card sets, and 100 card-sized original sketches randomly inserted into the boxes (now there's a card that will bring in big bucks!). Dealers can profitably sell packs for 75 cents and sets for five dollars, but there will be intense demand for the chase cards.

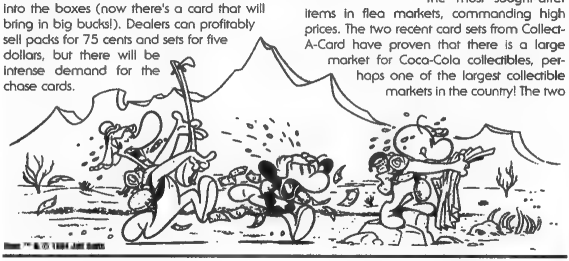
Now for the secrets: **Bone** is a black-and-white comic, but the cards will feature all-new color art. Due to its lack of color and super-heroes, **Bone** is not yet well known outside a small, fanatical, growing set of collectors, and this will tend to keep dealer orders down. The marketplace will still be reeling from the arrival of the **Spider-Man** cards from the previous month, and that will tend to inhibit orders as well -- so **Vantage** expects the cards could sell briskly in many areas as collectors have to search them out.

And there will be more collectors coming soon -- the original Bone stories are already being reprinted in color in *Disney Adventures* magazine. Not only does this ensure a tide of small kids squealing, "Look Mommy, it's Bone," but several years from now these little kids will grow up and want to collect those neat cards they saw when they were kids. And the supply of **Bone** cards ordered for the current marketplace may prove to be wholly inadequate.

...There are a few quiet secrets that virtually ensure the long-term success of these cards.

Out of the Flea Market and into the Malls

For years Coca-Cola trays have been one of the most sought-after items in flea markets, commanding high prices. The two recent card sets from Collect-A-Card have proven that there is a large market for Coca-Cola collectibles, perhaps one of the largest collectible markets in the country! The two



previous **Coca-Cola** card sets continue to sell well, particularly at mall shows where they can be shown off to a large public that would want the cards, but doesn't even know that they exist. Collectors have not only been buying card sets and chase cards, they have also been actively seeking out the wrappers for the cards which were wisely put out with numerous different premises.

Now, following in the footsteps of Elvis and Star Wars, Metallic Images is coming out with a **Coca-Cola** set. This special tin set contains twenty metallic cards which feature pictures of the women from various Coca-Cola ads of the past. So far, metallic card sets have done extremely well, perhaps because of the novelty and high quality, and **Vantage** expects no less for this tin. While a print run has not been announced, it is likely that any limited run will leave some collectors willing to fork over extra "silver" for these tins!

Cards That Don't Suck?

The world didn't need the Beavis and Butt-Head show, but we got it anyway, and it was a big success. The comics industry didn't need a Beavis and Butt-Head comic book, but first prints of issue number one are already moving briskly at two to three times cover. The card market had better brace itself -- here come **Beavis and Butt-Head** trading cards.

Fleer is putting out a high-quality set of 150 cards, complete with UV coating, foil stamping, and chase cards that apparently defy description (because nobody will describe them to us!). There is a huge market for these cards, and the sample uncut sheets which have been distributed have helped fan the flames (heh-heh, we said "flames"). The cards are due out while the series is still extremely popular, and the cult status of this B&B pair should help the cards sell out quickly. Sales and price increases should be helped by the fact that these cards are being offered only to comic stores and specialty outlets, reducing the potential supply (and alternative sales locations and competition) dramatically.

One word of caution -- these cards start out extremely expensive. This didn't slow down the sales of the **Fleer Ultra X-Men** cards but the B&B cards run the risk of "sticker shock" (heh-heh, we said "shock"). Of course, a large number of the people buying these cards will likely be buying collector cards for the first time, and an expanded non-sports card marketplace is exactly what's needed to support higher prices.

*The card market had better brace itself – here come **Beavis and Butt-Head** trading cards.*

Preview Cards For Everyone

One of the things that card collectors treasure most is promo cards, partly because of the scarcity and corresponding value, and partly because they are fun to show off. In preparation for the release of the **Akira** card set, Cornerstone Communications is releasing a ten-card preview set. This set has nine regular cards and one prism card. But the best news is that the cards *will not be included in the regular card set* that will follow about a month later.

Akira is a Japanese comic that is based on a Japanese movie which appeals to the many

Coca-Cola logo ™ & © 1994 Coca-Cola

Japanimation fans, and these cards should be greedily snapped up when they appear. Better still, when the full card set shows up a month later, the preview set could easily sell at an ever-increasing price. (Vantage expects dealers could pay more attention to the second solicitation than to the small preview set).

A "Solid" Card Sheet

Last year, 21st Century Archives hit the market with a three-card set of Frazetta holograms which sold out quickly. This month they are releasing 1000 uncut sheets of these holograms. While these sheets will retail for roughly three times the cost of the original three holograms, the limited print run of the uncut sheet could easily support the higher price while creating a rare collectible.

The Speculative Corner: Continuity Raises the Odds

The recent Continuity comics are all tied together in the Rise of Magic, and the covers that were solicited for early Spring all have something in common: a special hologram can be placed on each cover to "complete" the picture. This special hologram is bagged with only one out of every 25 copies of **Knighthawk, The Protector** #1, but dealers can order the hologram separately at a discount off the suggested retail price of $3.50.

It's not likely that dealers will order these in the same quantity as they order the comics, so this is a chance to order something that should sell extremely well to those who collect the Continuity books. Further, this is a great gimmick for selling comics to card collectors ("And just look what happens when you place this hologram over the cover of each of these books. Would you like one of each of them?")

While the covers of the Continuity comics have been more experimental than those from any other company, their shipping schedule

PUBLISHERS: HELP US TO HELP YOU!

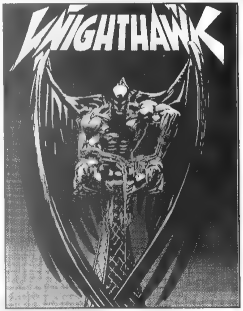
Vantage can be an invaluable resource to publishers in three great ways...

1. Your press releases can be published in **Vantage: Press Release Review** at no charge.
2. Your advertising will reach the most important people in comics - retailers, show dealers, wholesalers, and the most serious collectors!
3. Your questions about how you can attract the attention of the market to build sales and readership can be answered. **Vantage** has given advice to all types of publishers, both large and small! Contact us for some free and confidential advice.

VANTAGE is the place to be!

(perhaps as a result) has been less than dependable. The company cancelled all the special cover comics and reso-licited them, and **Vantage** suspects that most dealers did not reorder either the comics or the holograms.

The final, pivotal issue of the series, **Rise of Magic Special: The Closing of the Eye**, is scheduled to ship one month after the hologram. This is important because it has a special embossed cover with a special area designed for the hologram. If sales of the Continuity line recover as a result of a more dependable shipping pattern, readership (and demand for the comics and the hologram) can be expected to grow -- and supplies of the special hologram one month after it ships should be very, very low compared to the demand for it.



KnightHawk ™ & © 1994 Continuity Comics

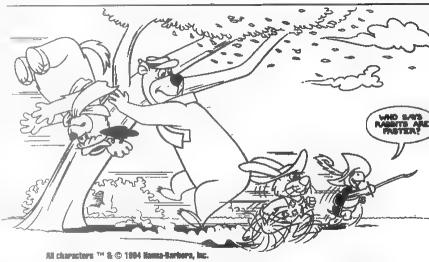
Quick Notes

Several sets of cartoon-related cards are due out. Cardz is bringing us the **Hanna-Barbera Classics** and the **Tiny Toons Adventures** cards, but neither set appears to have any chase cards. These card sets are therefore likely be impulse buys rather than long-term collectibles.

A **Flintstones** card set is due to arrive about the same time as the upcoming movie. Topps is putting out a set of 88 cards, 11 stickers, and four "Flintfoil" chase cards. The success of these cards will be dependent on the success of the movie, and it is always dangerous to try to predict the outcome of Hollywood releases.

There are only three major art card releases this month. Cardz enters this expanding market with **Julie Bell Fantasy Art** cards, featuring artwork from the woman who did some of the **Fleer Ultra X-Men** card artwork. The unusual wrinkle with this set is that it is a fifty-card set with a ten-card "Tekchrome" subset -- pick up the subset cards quickly, as these are likely to be highly sought after. Comic Images is releasing the **Maxfield Parrish** cards, and Friedlander is coming out with a set of cards from **Larry Elmore**, another TSR fantasy artist.

Friedlander is going to start producing binders for each of its art card sets. The binders will retail for more than the card sets are currently selling for, but each binder will come with one card which was not in the regular set, which may help sales. There is likely to be more demand for the binder which come out concurrently with the card sets, which would give the nod to the Larry Elmore binder (although you might try loading the other binders with sets of cards and selling them for a premium to people who are just getting into art cards).



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☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Skybox

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SkyBox INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TRADING CARD SALES TOP $2 BILLION IN 1993; SKYBOX RELEASES NEW MARKET RESEARCH INFORMATION

DURHAM, N.C. -- Total trading cards retail sales topped the $2 billion level in 1993, at $2.026 billion, according to research on the market released today by SkyBox International.

The research indicates that while the overall market for trading cards has held steady since 1992, individual market segments have changed significantly. The fastest growing segment was basketball cards from a percentage (+45 percent) and dollar (+$125 million) level, followed closely by trading cards based on comic characters (+41.5 percent) and other entertainment (non-sports) figures (+36.5 percent). The surge in consumer collecting of basketball cards can largely be attributed to the growing interest in the sport because of the entry into the NBA of exciting, high profile players/personalities. The growth in market share of comic and entertainment cards coincided with a dramatic rise in comic book sales and an increase in the number of entertainment properties now featured on cards.

The research also indicated an overall decline in the 1993 retail sales of both baseball and football cards. Hockey cards experienced a modest increase in sales.

"We are certainly pleased with the 1993 sales figures for basketball, comic, and entertainment cards, which generally reflect a rising interest among Americans in the NBA, comic books, movies and television," said Scott McCauley, SkyBox vice president of marketing. "These figures are consistent with the success we have had in these three market segments over the last year."

When SkyBox first began producing cards in 1989, under the name Impel Marketing, the market share for basketball cards was less than five percent, as was the market share for all non-sports cards--comic and entertainment combined. In 1993, basketball comprised fully 20 percent of the overall trading card market, while comic and entertainment cards combined for a more than 16 percent share.

"Our innovative marketing and production leadership have tremendously increased fan interest in these categories," said McCauley. "In addition, basketball and comic trading cards have become the point of entry for new collectors. While competitive companies in the industry have since followed us into these market segments, we look forward to continued growth of both the trading card category as a whole and for the market share devoted to the SkyBox brand."

SkyBox, based in Durham, North Carolina, is a leading manufacturer of basketball cards, producing NBA HOOPS, the official NBA Basketball Card, and SkyBox Premium NBA Basketball Cards. In addition, SkyBox is the nation's largest manufacturer of comic and entertainment cards. The company marketed top-selling products in 1993 through licenses with DC Comics, Malibu Comics, Paramount Pictures, and The Walt Disney Company, among others.

The SkyBox market survey was based on a combination of public records and surveys of distributors and retailers nationwide throughout 1993.

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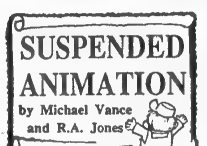
COMICS ARE FOR READING FIRST

Bone #9 & #10/$2.95, 25 pages each from Cartoon Books/available in comic shops.

Universal praise is food for cynicism among critics. They know (those dogs!) that only the uneducated or unexperienced believe in perfection, and a critic's instinct is to pick "perfection" to the bone.

Bone is perfect pickin's.



In it's ninth issue, creator Jeff Smith picks a granny to enter the annual Cow Race. A "Mystery Cow" is the favorite pick of almost every village gambler. The race is fixed in favor of the heifer.

Fone, Phoney, and Smiley Bone are exiles from Bonefill (and the School of Cloying Names?). Phoney has rigged this race with Smiley disguised as a cow. And Fone loves village beauty, Thorn. But questions remain unanswered.

"Smith takes these artistically mismatched apples and oranges and blends them into a feast for the eye."

First, where's the beef on **Bone?**

Secondly, how do you make the critics happy?

Sure, Smith's art is incredible despite too-obvious influences. Granny is on loan from Tweety and Sylvester cartoons. Smiley is a weird abstraction of Albert the Alligator. Smiley and Bone landscapes are both borrowed from the comic strip Pogo. And Thorn and her neighbors are Disney stock characters. But Smith takes these artistically mismatched apples and oranges and blends them into a feast for the eye.

Expressions are human even on inhuman faces. Composition and the contrast of black and white area make each panel excellent visual storytelling. And Jeff knows less is more.

Still, where's the plot?

Sure, the dialogue is natural. Of course Thorn, Fone, Lucius, and Rosie all feel familiar. That and drama, pathos, fear, and humor are parts of this fine story. But where's Conflict? The Meat?

In the tenth issue bonehead. The ninth set the table. The tenth serves the beef, rich and satisfying.

And how do you make critics happy?

Throw the dogs this BONE. Highly recommended.

MINIVIEW: WANDERING STAR. Casandra fights in an intergalactic war. Promising art and gentle story elevate this comic that still needs . . . aging. Fantasy and SF.

TOP READING PICK OF THE MONTH

X-O MANOWAR

X-O Manowar is so cool.

He's a barbarian. That's cool.

He's uses lots of technology. Coolness is now doubled.

He's fair but tough . . . he doesn't take any crap. Way, way cool.

"He's fair but tough . . . he doesn't take any crap."

Even if you don't follow the whole Valiant universe, you can usually understand **X-O Manowar** alone without buying the other titles. **X-O Manowar** is Valiant's most fun title.

The story, basically, is that he's this barbarian from the past who has found himself thrust into the present. He's got Iron Man-style armor that could probably open up ol' shell head like a can opener. To top it off he owns a corporation and runs it like, well a barbarian, referring to it as the "empire."

For some good clean fun, X-O Manowar is your man. Check him out.

☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Triumphant

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TRIUMPHANT COMICS SOLICITATION INFORMATION

JUNE 1994

BREAKAWAY HIT!

Company X #1

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE MONTHLY ONGOING SERIES!

THE STORY OF *COMPANY X* #1

Incredible circumstances instigated by Doctor Chaos and the other lords of PATHOS have finally come to pass. Candi, an intergalactic assassin, and three small children must fight to protect the Landing — the largest space station in the Universe. Their enemy, Surzar, has discovered the secret of controlling the Landing's inner functions and intends to use it as a power base to subjugate the universe. Only Candi and the children, JD, Ky'li, and Wurm, have the power to stop Surzar — if they can figure out how to use it!

This issue features characters who have debuted in The Chromium Man, Prince Vandal, and Riot Gear and is a must read for every Triumphant fan.

ABOUT THE COMIC BOOKS THEMSELVES

1. Each issue's cover bears the Galactic Chronometry Year date (*Universal Date Indicator*™) in which the story takes place, so that readers can easily follow the entire chronology.
2. Each issue's cover features the book's individual serial number along with the total print run quantity of that issue.
3. All issues of Triumphant Comics are part of Triumphant's interlocking universe.

PRICING/SPECIFICATIONS

***Company X* #1**
Genre: Action Adventure/Science Fiction
Shipping from NORTHPRINT
On sale week 6/16/94

Cover features the *Universal Date Indicator*™ and Serial Numbering
Script by John Riley
Pencils by Bill Knapp
Edited by the Triumphant Universe Development Team

Full Color Cover
32 Full Color Pages
$2.50 USA $3.45 CAN

VANTAGE

Triumphant's Science Fiction Slant

The Triumphant universe is a much more science fiction oriented universe than any other major competitor's universe. That's why Triumphant has wisely chosen to place this "Science Fiction Action Adventure" box on each new book. Look for new sci-fi fans to jump on board, increasing demand for back-issues!

Science Fiction Action Adventure

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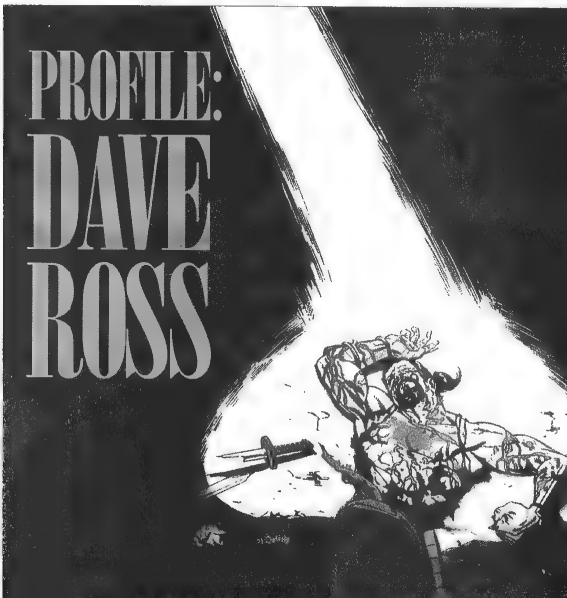
PROFILE: DAVE ROSS



He started his career in animation, worked for DC Comics, and then went on to draw many old and new characters in the Marvel Universe. Now this accomplished artist is adding Valiant Comics ***Rai and the Future Force*** *to his impressive portfolio.*

by Janet L. Hetherington

Rai ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc.

INTERVIEW: DAVE ROSS

Vantage: *Before beginning your career in comics, did you take any formal art training?*

Dave: I went to Sheridan College [in Canada], in their animation program. I worked for two different studios. I was an animator as well as a storyboard person. When I went to Nelvana, I was doing storyboards and layouts. The big one that I worked on at Nelvana was **Rock and Rule**. You can still see it being shown and sold at conventions in the States.

Vantage: *How long have you been drawing comics, and how did you get started?*

Dave: I guess I've been working in comics now for about eight years. I started in Canada, with a couple of small jobs for **Vortex** magazine, and one of those caught the attention of an agent down in the States, Mike Friedrich. Mike wanted to represent me on getting work with companies like DC...DC, actually more than Marvel, because he had a lot of good connections with DC Comics — and with some of the independents. So the first thing I actually did was a project called **Avalon**, which was for Pacific Comics. The first installment of that did come out in the back of a magazine called **Vanity**. **Vanity** was a kind of a cheese-cake comic book drawn by Will Meugniot [creator of **Exo Squad**], and **Avalon** came out in his second issue, but that's just about the time Pacific went belly up.

Vantage: *So you started looking elsewhere?*

Dave: That's right. In fact, that's the first time I went down to San Diego to the convention down there, and I ended up making connections over at DC at that convention, which I then needed to call upon in fairly short order. I got a couple of annuals to start with: Batman and the Outsiders annual; and a Star Trek annual. Star Trek was fun

Vantage: *You also worked extensively for Marvel?*

Dave: Yeah...It all started with Al Milgrom coming up to Toronto one time for a convention. Al saw some of my early work, and saw some promise in it, and I ended up getting a Marvel Fanfare story. Shortly after that, when I had just completed those two annuals for DC, I got a call out of the blue from Bill Mantlo. He was writing **Alpha Flight** at the time, and was interested in getting me involved in it, and was recommending my work to Carl Potts, the editor. That all came through, and that was my first long-running project, doing **Alpha Flight** for 10 issues.

Rai ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc.
Magnus Robot Fighter ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc & Western Publishing Company, Inc.

Vantage: *You must have felt good being a Canadian, working on a book that featured Canadian super-heroes?*

Dave: I guess...I don't know! My feeling was that Canadians are so critical of that book, that I would have almost felt more comfortable working on a good old American character!

Vantage: *Well, you did end up working on some good old American characters like the Punisher, did you not?*

Dave: Oh yeah. I did two issues of **Punisher** and a few more issues later on of **Punisher: War Journal**. I did four issues of **Excalibur**, and I also did a Hulk/Wolverine series for **Marvel Comics Presents** earlier on. I did a couple of issues of **Cloak and Dagger**, guest-starring Spider-Man, and I did a Spider-Man annual which worked out very well — guest-starring Cloak and Dagger! And **Avengers West Coast** was a later job at Marvel.

Vantage: *So you really got to draw a lot of the Marvel characters...*

Robbie the Reasoner™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc.
Magnus Robot Fighter & Logo ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc & Western Publishing Company, Inc.

Dave: Oh yeah, but not the Fantastic Four. I would have always loved a shot at the Fantastic Four.

Vantage: *Now you're doing something a little different, working on Valiant's* ***Rai and the Future Force****?*

"My feeling was that Canadians are so critical of that book [Alpha Flight], that I would have almost felt more comfortable working on a good old American character!... I would have always loved a shot at the Fantastic Four."

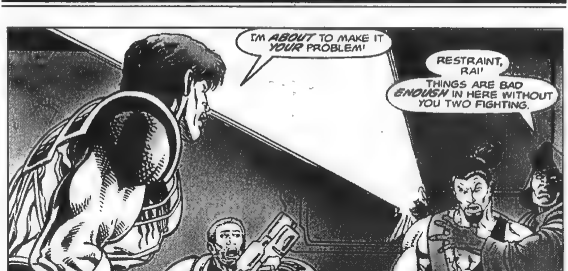
Dave: Yeah, that's true. I thought, this is great...I was going to go on to a *single character* after doing a *big group book* — not!

Seriously, I've done three issues, and I've just started on my fourth, and so far it's been a real good experience.

Vantage: *How do you find working with brand-new characters, rather than more familiar Marvel ones?*

Dave: I don't think it's either here or there. Certainly, a lot of the characters at Marvel that I was working on were of a more recent vintage. There's the odd one — obviously Spider-Man who I grew up with — and some of the West Coast Avengers characters went back a long way. But there were lots of other characters there that I wasn't all that familiar with.

But Rai is enjoyable for me and a challenge for me, because he is an Oriental character. You've got to keep his features looking consistent and looking Oriental during the course of the book — every angle, every shot, every expression you can imagine. And to me, that's quite a challenge, but I'm enjoying it.

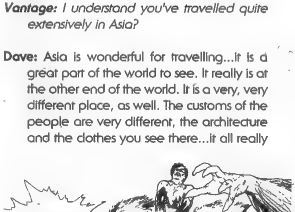


Rai, Stagger, & Byteche ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc. Magnus Robot Fighter ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc & Western Publishing Company, Inc.

Vantage: *I understand you've travelled quite extensively in Asia?*

Dave: Asia is wonderful for travelling...it is a great part of the world to see. It really is at the other end of the world. It is a very, very different place, as well. The customs of the people are very different, the architecture and the clothes you see there...it all really is quite wonderful. It's the next best thing to stepping through some kind of time portal. Not that there isn't a lot of our western culture, but there's still lots of the old ways.

And they love comics there, too. They have a lot of their own...mostly black and white, some imported. In fact, Singapore is really big on comics. The last time I was there, they had about 14 comic shops. I could go into a comic shop and see a copy of **Rai**, or **West Coast Avengers!** No problem. And it would be in the original English as well. I just wish they would invite me over for a convention!



Alpha Flight ™ & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Vantage: *Are you able to use this experience in your comic book work?*

Dave: To a degree. If I'm doing some particular work with character design, costume design, or even some of the architecture, I'm able to draw on it for atmosphere. And, of course, I take lots of photos, so I have lots of photo reference to go back to. I never thought of it as directly relating to the work, but it does at times.

Vantage: *Rai is a monthly book...how do you handle the demands of your penciling schedule?*

Dave: Well, I put in pretty long hours...I usually start at around nine o'clock in the morning, and my working day ends anywhere from nine to ten or ten-thirty at night. I work right at home — very convenient — roll out of bed, and after a short period of time I'm at the board. Rai is taking up my life at the moment.

Vantage: *Are you able to put your own imprint on the book?*

Dave: Well, I think readers are perhaps the best judge of that. I certainly have not changed anything in terms of my general approach and my general feelings on storytelling just because I switched from Marvel to Valiant. The book is very much what I was doing on **West Coast Avengers**.

Vantage: *Who were your artistic influences when you first started drawing comics?*

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YOU'RE A PRO, SIMON.. AS AN ACTOR, AND AS AN AVENGER.
ACT LIKE ONE.

Iron Man & Wonder Man ™ & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

Dave: Oh, a whole bunch of people. Jack Kirby. John Buscema. Neal Adams. Bernie Wrightson. Jim Steranko. I don't know...a whole bunch of others. Some of those will show up more or less in my work; some of them might not show up at all.

I got a real chuckle out of the people in the audience at a convention a while ago, when a whole bunch of different folks were doing drawings on big sheets of paper, and a lady was asking each of us that very question. And when she got to me, I said, "Oh, Vaughn Bodé!"

I was only sort of half kidding about that, and half serious at the same time. Looking at all that wonderful Vaughn Bodé stuff made me appreciate how to do things that were wonderfully 3-D, and wonderfully rich, in simple forms. The beauty was the simplicity of that work...his work was shorthand...lines laid down in the right places.

Vantage: *Has the comic book business changed over the eight years you've worked in it?*

Dave: Well, stylistically, what the popular style to work in has changed and evolved. It's hard to say beyond that. The speculation market has done a lot to expectations and sales of different titles. There's been an incredible explosion of material in the market in the past couple of years. On the production end, there are technologies coming into place now so that more and more color work will be done on computer. It's getting so refined with coloring — and "inking" — right on the computer, that you can enhance the blacks of good tight pencils. But I think it's unlikely that the comic book artist will be replaced by a computer. It's like Murray Madaughlin sang, "Welcome to the modern age...It's just beginning."

JOE QUESADA VS. VALIANT

Ninjak ™ & © 1994 Voyager Communications, Inc.

Valiant and superhot **Ninjak** artist Joe Quesada have ended their business relationship amid rumors of lateness and bad faith. Joe Quesada issued a statement through noted retailer Gary Colabuono over CompuServe in order to "stop the speculating once and for all."

Quesada reports that there is no signed contract. "I've been waiting for six months; issues #1-3 were done in good faith. That's 70 pages of **Ninjak** (including covers) without Dime One," Quesada complained.

Valiant spokesman Marty Stever insists however that it is normal industry practice for a contract to be delayed. Stever asserted that it "might not be in Joe's legal interest to take money until the contract is signed." He added, "Joe never complained about the contract before he was taken off **Ninjak** #4. He was told how much he'd be paid and he'll be paid that much."

*So if lateness is not the reason Quesada was "taken off" **Ninjak** then what was?*

Quesada also feels that accusations of lateness are just a smoke screen -- not the real reason for the end to his chores at Valiant. "They never offered me a chance to catch up! I'm not without sin. I was running behind, but I was picking up tremendous momentum and was actually catching up."

Strever, however asserted that Quesada "has never been catching up." He added that for a single week Quesada did "a page a day," and then drew almost no pages in the weeks that followed. Stever called it a "public embarrassment to Valiant" that Quesada's books were shipping late, indicating that Publisher Steve Massarsky gave Quesada repeated chances to improve because Massarsky viewed Quesada as a friend.

Stever added that **Ninjak** #3 shipped so late that it endangered Valiant's bonus card promotion. Each of the fourteen Valiant titles contains one of fourteen Upper Deck cards which together could be mailed in for six chromium cards. The fourteen cards had to be mailed in by a deadline that was already announced in various Valiant comics.

Ninjak #3 was supposed to come out in January with one of the fourteen cards enclosed, but the last page of the book was not turned in to Valiant until February 12, said Stever.

Quesada insists however that #3 was finished on the ninth and that when he asked to begin work on **Ninjak** #4 he discovered that "only eight pages were written, and yet to be edited! On February 14, I was taken off issue #4... I had the cover done on the morning Steve Massarsky called. If scheduling was really the reason then why wasn't

someone working on #4, or #5 or #6 for that matter, while I was doing #3?"

So if lateness is not the reason Quesada was "taken off" **Ninjak** then what was?

> *"...It is tough to separate business, and friendship..."*

Quesada sees less noble motives; "Hey, the bottom drops out of the market, and Valiant is left having to pay me good money for a book that hasn't sold as well as anticipated. Funny also is that the only things offered to me on the morning of February 14 were two books (**Ninjak** #0 and **The Chaos Effect**) that had yet to be solicited. Try to read between the lines here!"

Stever seemed shocked at this allegation and termed it "offensive." He reiterated that the problem was plain and simple lateness and added, "Many people wanted to pull Joe earlier but Steve Massarsky stuck by him."

Quesada scoffs at the fact that "they let me go to the NY Con and promote their line and **Ninjak** to their greatest abilities, and then – and only then – after I was done did they drop the other shoe. 'Honey, thank you so much for buying me that diamond ring I asked for yesterday. Oh, and by the way, I'm divorcing you!' "

Stever reported that Publisher Steve Massarsky had left for a short vacation believing that upon returning he'd find Quesada well into #4. When Massarsky discovered that he'd just finished number three, Stever said that Massarsky viewed this as the last straw – Quesada would have to go.

Stever insisted at length that he, Massarsky, and Valiant have considered Quesada a dose personal friend and that his allegations were painful to hear. Quesada agreed, "Although I have only skimmed the surface of the details, I still consider all the people at Valiant my good friends, including and especially Steve Massarsky. It is tough to separate business, and friendship..."

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Valiant

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VOYAGER COMMUNICATIONS INC

PRESS RELEASE

Do to the highly personal nature of this press release, we kindly request all quotes be used in their entirety and not taken out of context. Should you need further information, PLEASE call me before going to press.

Joe Quesada To Leave Ninjak™

Ninjak #3 will be the last issue penciled by Joe Quesada for the time being. Because Quesada had fallen extremely far behind on his deadlines, Valiant chose to schedule an alternate penciler for one issue of the series. Quesada felt that this would interfere with his development of the Ninjak character and has removed humself from the book.

"I have nothing bad to say about Joe. He's an incredibly talented artist and he's a great guy," said Valiant's Vice-President Marketing Marty Stever. "Joe worked very hard on *Ninjak* #1-3 and that hard work shows on every page. However, due to a variety of personal and professional conflicts, Joe was unable to maintain a monthly schedule."

"We felt that the most reasonable solution would be to have the series writer, Mark Moretti, pencil one issue and allow Joe the time needed to get caught up," continued Stever. "Publisher Steve Massarsky made this decision, in consultation with Editor-in-Chief Bob Layton, after Joe had turned in the pages for *Ninjak* #3. We were all surprised by the news that Joe felt that he could not tolerate our plan to allow him to catch up. Joe was offered reassignment to *Ninjak* #0, our big summer project, *The Chaos Effect*™, or the option to pick up *Ninjak* again with issue #5."

Quesada continued next page...

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☆OFFICIAL☆ PRESS RELEASE

Valiant

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VOYAGER COMMUNICATIONS INC.

"It's unfortunate that Joe simply could not maintain a monthly schedule," said Stever. "It was clear that we might have to schedule an alternate penciler for an issue several months ago, which is why Joe's name was not included on the solicitations for *Ninjak* #4 through 6. Obviously, given *Ninjak's* monthly schedule, Joe needed help to catch up and we offered it. We're very sorry that Joe would not go along with any option presented him."

"*Ninjak* #1 through 3 speak for themselves," concluded Stever. "The combination of great writing and great artwork led to the creation of great comics. Once again, I have nothing bad to say about Joe, and we feel Joe is a stand-up guy. We're sorry we could not reach an accommodation to his liking, and we look forward to seeing more of his dynamic pencils in the future."

Taking over pencils for Quesada on *Ninjak* will be the series writer Mark Moretti. Moretti has already produced much of the promotional art for the series and now brings his crisp pencils and sharp storytelling sense to one of Valiant's most popular characters.

VANTAGE

What Now For Quesada?

Now that Quesada has left Valiant he's a free agent! Quesada's extreme popularity is sure to land him a variety of work fast in spite of his reported lateness. Quesada is already signed up to do covers for DC Comics! Look for his work on the covers of DC's NEW *The Ray* #1-2, Vantage picks for this month!

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(heh-heh-heh . . . we're so sneaky)

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VANTAGE VIEWPOINTS

10238 West National Ave, #166, West Allis, WI 53227

Dear Viewpoints,

Liked your old format.
Like your new format.
Why not publish the correct answers to the questions from the Wizard scavenger hunt?

Ace Willie
Beloit, WI

Ace, sounds like a great idea. Here they are . . .
Wizard Scavenger Hunt
1) Find the best magazine. Answer: Vantage.
2) Who has the best picks? Answer: Vantage.
3) Who takes the marketplace seriously? Answer: Vantage.—VV

Hey Vantage Viewpoints,

I own a small shop in Brevard County and think your mag is great! Although the market is leveling off, the area I'm in still manages to support around 10 shops. Just thought that I'd point out some picks of my own.

Punisher War Zone #7 (1st appearance female Punisher)
Captain Atom #42 (2nd appearance of Death)
Secret Origins #12 (Golden Age Fury)
Wonder Woman #300 (Golden Age Fury)

Keep doin' a great job!

Kevin G. Browning
Famous Faces & Funnies
Melbourne, FL

Hey, Kevin, thanks for the picks! Our advisors tell us the market is improving around the country — we hope the same goes for Brevard! —VV

Dear Vantage Viewpoints,

I really enjoy the "hot" tips available only in Vantage. I still think it would be great to know the movement on your "Top Picks" from previous issues. Some things are listed one month, then never heard from again in future issues. Did you make a "bad call"? Are the "hot picks" getting hotter? Keep us informed! I admit, you do that to some degree, but not enough.

As for some names for the Vantage cat:

1) Felix (related to the Cartoon/Comics)
2) Mag (short for magazine/maggie)
3) Comix (obvious)
4) Topix (get it? Top Picks)
5) Specs or Spex ("speculation" aspect)

Try these for size! Your guide is the best by far!

Jim Hulin
High Point, NC

*Gee, Jim, didn't you know we never make a bad call? Actually, that's not true. We've had our share of bad calls — no pick list can be perfect, but we do feel confident that our two-year track record is the best in the business. We don't dwell on the bad calls, or on the good ones for that matter, because **Vantage** is a forward-looking magazine. We focus on the future and let our track record speak for itself. —VV*

We can't write back, but we read everything and we'll print what you have to say, space permitting! Write to:

Vantage Viewpoints
10238 West National Ave, #166
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Win a copy of Triumphant's Doctor Chaos #2 signed by the writer and the artist! Every one who gets a letter printed in Vantage: Press Release Review #4 wins a copy!

THE ONLY SERIOUS FUTURE PICK LIST!

A VANTAGE PRESS RELEASE REVIEW

TIMELINE

...Somewhere between Zero Hour™ and the Chaos Effect™...

1st We say: "It's gonna happen!"

2nd It happens!

3rd Other mags say: "It happened! And we noticed! Are we cutting edge or what?"

STOP

... reading about the past and start reading about the future! Vantage contains the only serious future pick list!

"Top Pick of the Month"

–Vantage on *Green Lantern* #48 before it came out!